



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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LEGALLY BLONDE

The Metropolitan Musical Theatre Company of SA ("The Met")

Arts Theatre

Until 15th May 2021

Review by Lance Jones

This last year has been awful for theatre goers and thespians alike, consigned to relative solitary confinement of TV binging, zoom parties and reminiscing of shows gone by. So, after months of rehearsing, cancelling, waiting and then starting all over again, it's not surprising that The Met has just stormed the barricades and broken out with an outrageously raucous, larger-than-life spectacular version of the musical "Legally Blonde".

Like the tide being released from a broken dyke, The Met exploded onto the stage from the very raising of the curtain. The wonderfully busy and well executed choreography of Jacinta Vistoli combines splendidly with Director Carolyn Adam's ever-so-pink and multi-level set to grab you from the get-go. The well-seasoned orchestra put together by uber-experienced Musical Director Ben Stefanoff sounded an almost smugly triumphant return to live theatre.

If it wasn't for the masks, one would surely notice a sea of mouths wide open at the spectacle.

Yes, there were errors and some valid criticisms that need to be mentioned. At times there seemed to be a disconnect between the stage singers and the musicians, with some cues occasionally falling flat. The out of sync or non-existent vamping was noticeable. There were a few lost and stumbled lines. The sound-mix at times made it hard to hear what the voices were singing. Two of the theatre lights seemed to develop a mind of their own and began twirling for no apparent reason. There were some noticeably flat notes, and at times one could say it may have been a little too frenetic and fast paced for the less stout-hearted.

Yet, all that was relatively minor in the wider scheme of things. The Met's well-established penchant for delivering well-choreographed and expertly directed shows has shone through.

The well selected cast was as familiar as it was well drilled. The Met has collected an impressive array of very talented young dancers that have graced their performances before. Grace Frost, Sophie Schwab, Vanessa Crouch, Jasmin Paukkunen, Matt Barnett and Jasmin Duggan each expertly reprised their previous Met dancing offerings and did not disappoint, joined ably by a talented crew of fine movers. Simon Barnett has once again played the slightly-too-smooth ("anti") hero with acting aplomb, very much looking the part, albeit with some flat notes at times. Claire Birbeck was amusing as the exercise-junky "Brooke Wyndham", complete with subtle but noticeable fake "abs". Kristin Stefanoff was convincing in her portrayal of the uber-rich princess who turned out nice in the end, while Jay Mancuso impressed with his wonderful baritone voice. Tammy Shields played "Enid Hoopes" with talent and good voice. Daniel Fleming gave us a convincing Emmett Forest, the somewhat daggy corduroy-clad Law associate-wannabe who predictably "got the girl in the end". Dakota Jackson and Ashleigh Rathjen rounded out the principles, their character roles presented interestingly and with ease.

This wonderfully busy cast was headed up by the obvious star of the show Lucy Carey, playing the lead role of the seemingly ditzy but ultimately critically talented Law student Elle Woods. Lucy's performance was impressive. A real "triple threat", she was on stage almost continuously, able to seamlessly warp from



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frenetic ensemble dancer to solo vocalist and character actor. She was a pleasure to watch in this very demanding role.

A number of particular moments scream out from the pack. Eve McMillan's "Paulette" stole the show at times, her talent obviously in a class of its own. Shane Huang's portrayal of the indignant lover of Iman Saleh's expertly portrayed cringeworthy "pool cleaner" character was hilarious, the two of them making the deliciously politically-incorrect number "Gay or European" a stand out example of why we need to lighten up about that sort of stuff at times and just enjoy the laugh. Simon Rich's "porn star" entrance was almost as impressive as his on-stage backflip. Nadine Wood's characterisation of a "Judge Judy" parody was nicely done.

And, the two dogs "Roxy" and "Phyllis" won the audience over simply by being there.

The Met's production of "Legally Blonde" was their emphatic cry of "we're back!" with a vengeance. If you are looking for an all-singing, all-dancing tsunami of sound and movement to blow away the Covid cobwebs, this is surely the show for you.